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**WorkFirst Handbook – Issued 6/1/2002**

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### *Legal References:*

- RCW 74.12.400,  
.410
- [WAC 388-472-  
0005](#)

*Public  
Law 104-*

### **What is TANF application screening?**

A TANF application screening is the process we go through when a participant first applies for TANF or SFA cash assistance. When an application for TANF benefits is turned in at the Community Services Office, a financial worker (usually a WorkFirst case manager, or an experienced FSS with WorkFirst case management knowledge) will conduct a screening of the TANF application before the applicant has the TANF eligibility intake interview. This screening must not interfere with screening for expedited food assistance or delay application processing for any programs.

### **Screen for NSA (Necessary Supplemental Accommodation)**

The department has a responsibility to explain NSA services, screen CSO clients for disabilities, and make accommodations available to clients. These services are always delivered at the CSO and each CSO creates it's own procedures for NSA screening and service delivery. Follow CSO procedures when delivering NSA services.

### Link to EAZ Manual:

<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/eazmanual/Sections/NSA.htm>

The rest of this section will describe the four main things to consider when doing the TANF application screening. Do the applicants:

193 Sec.  
407

- Have other income or qualify for other types of benefits that will eliminate their need for TANF/SFA?
- Qualify for Diversion Cash Assistance (DCA)?
- Receive child support (or can they)?
- Have the ability to job search and can they find a job through same day job search?

**Example:**

*Melanie has just submitted an application for TANF. June, an experienced financial worker, screens her application. June helps determine if Melanie could avoid receiving monthly TANF benefits and possibly save her valuable TANF months.*

*She will offer food and medical assistance. June offers food and medical assistance and determines whether DCA is appropriate. If it is determined that there are no other supports available to help divert her, June proceeds with the application process.*

*She screens for other income, such as child support, which could help diminish Melanie's need for monthly TANF aid.*

*If it appears that Melanie will be eligible for TANF, June determines whether there are barriers, which could prevent*

**Other Income or Benefits**

The screener must use every tool available to help applicants avoid ongoing cash assistance. The screener:

- Determines if applicants have received TANF in the past and still qualify for support services,
- Offers medical assistance,
- Offers food assistance benefits, and
- Determines if participants are receiving or could receive child support.

**Diversion Cash Assistance (DCA)**

The best outcome for applicants is to eliminate their need to receive TANF/SFA cash aid if at all possible. DCA is designed for this purpose. The screener's first job is to discuss DCA with applicants and determine whether it is a viable option.

The goal is to help applicants through their temporary time of need as quickly as possible. If applicants are not able to do this without the aid of the TANF program, we need to try to ensure that their time spent receiving monthly TANF is as brief as possible. This helps applicants save their TANF months.

If DCA is not appropriate and other benefits alone will not allow the family to support themselves without TANF cash aid, the screener must then proceed with the TANF application screening process for monthly TANF benefits.

**Child Support**

**DCS Quick Referral for Child Support**

If child support can be added to wages, When-employed participants ~~receive other income (such as child support), they stand~~ have a better chance of exiting TANF ~~sooner~~. In an effort to help participants receive ~~any the~~ child support, ~~for which~~ they ~~may~~ qualify ~~for, the~~ Division of Child Support (DCS) has developed ~~a new screen~~ within SEMSlite, new screens named Quick Referral (QR). Quick Referral is a set of screens within

*which could prevent Melanie from engaging in Same Day Job Search.*

*June may determine there are barriers that she must address in order for Melanie to participate continually and be successful in job search. If Melanie needs a bus pass or referral for childcare, June resolves those needs and documents in E-JAS.*

*June refers Melanie to Same Day Job Search and documents the referral in E-JAS (via screening/evaluation).*

the SEMSlite system that gives the case manager/financial worker quick access to SEMS information and the ability to send electronic messages to DCS

~~Case managers/Financial workers~~ must use the Quick Referral during the screening/intake ~~in order~~ to verify ~~whether if a~~ participants ~~are is~~ receiving child support income. ~~Quick Referral is a new set of screens within the SEMSlite system that gives the case manager quick access to SEMS information and the ability to send electronic messages to DCS. Specifically, it will~~

Quick Referral allows the ~~case manager/financial worker~~ to:

- ~~Find out~~See if DCS is receiving payment on the case,
- Let Inform DCS ~~know they need~~ to update incorrect household composition data in SEMS,
- ~~Find out~~ Determine whether DCS needs ~~just~~ an Assignment of Support Rights (DSHS 14-119), or a complete referral (DSHS 14-57)
- Notify ~~the DCS caseworker~~ of ~~other~~ case changes, such as changes of address or employment of the non-custodial parent.

### SEMSlite

The case manager should use SEMSlite when working with the participant to see if there is child support being collected. This may alter the participant's plan for leaving TANF. A minimum wage job combined with child support may enable the client to leave TANF.

The website for SEMSlite is:  
<http://lgc.dshs.wa.gov/semslite/>

### **Same day job search**

No TANF applicant with potential for immediate employment should have to wait for an eligibility determination before beginning job search. A referral to ESD for same day job search can result in a job and help the applicant avoid dependence on TANF/SFA cash aid.

If applicants intend to pursue TANF/SFA cash aid, the Screener:

- Completes screening/evaluation in e-JAS to

determine if the applicants are able to engage in job search,

- Refers for crisis intervention services, as needed, if issues are identified,
- Refers all applicants to same day job search (unless deferred) and makes sure they have transportation and child care in place,
- Explains the WorkFirst job search participation requirements and responsibilities,
- Updates E-JAS components for each fast-tracked job search referral,
- Writes an IRP that focuses on job search,
- Ensures that the applicant is scheduled for, or given the WorkFirst Orientation.

If the applicant has more in- depth issues (like homelessness or family violence) the screener should note this. During the actual intake interview the case manager can follow up and, if necessary, make a referral for appropriate services and resolution.

#### **TANF application screening step by step**

1) ~~4)~~ The screener determines whether applicants have other income or may qualify for other benefits that may diminish or eliminate their need to receive monthly TANF and ensure they screen, explain, and offer Supplemental Services as described in the NSA plan as needed

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Link to EAZ Manual:

<http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/esa/eazmanual/Sections/NSA.htm>

a) If DCA is appropriate authorizes it.  
(see EAZ Manual: [Diversion Cash Assistance](#))

b) If DCA is not appropriate:

- i) Determines whether applicants receive child support via [SEMS-Lite](#) Quick Referral,
- ii) Documents in [E-JAS](#) Screening/Evaluation, the screening for child support income, and/or the referral/assignment for child support collection,
- iii) Determines whether applicants are able to participate in Same Day Job Search, and

- iv) Documents the referral to Job Search in E-JAS.

2) The TANF screener must ensure that the TANF application screening does not interfere with screening for expedited food assistance, or delay application processing for any programs.